

January 22, 2014 (/full-blog/2014/01/make-it-snappy-congress-debate-over.html)

Make It “SNAP”py, Congress: Debate Over The Farm Bill and Its Effects On Impoverished Lexington, Kentucky Families (/full-blog/2014/01/make-it-snappy-congress-debate-over.html)



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By: Laura Myers, Staff Member

On November 1, 2013, impoverished families across the United States saw their monthly Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits decrease when the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) expired on October 31, 2013.[1]

(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn1)

ARRA, better known as the Stimulus Package, provided “a temporary boost in benefits to help individuals and families impacted by the economic downturn.”[2]

(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn2) In addition, the remaining amount of benefits to these low-income families is currently on the chopping block as Congress renegotiates the Food, Conservation, and Energy Act of 2008 (Farm Bill).[3]

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The Farm Bill expired on September 30, 2012, and its nutritional programs, like SNAP, were extended for one year and have continued to be extended up to the present.[4]

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Currently, the pending legislation Congress intends to pass will include staggering cuts to SNAP and other nutritional programs included in the Farm Bill.[5]

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Thus far, on June 10, 2013, a substantial majority (66-27) of the Senate passed a version of the bill that cut SNAP expenditures by \$4.1 billion. Then, the House passed the “Farm only version,” on July 11, 2013, with a slim majority (216-208)—from which all Democrats abstained—that completely removed SNAP from the Farm Bill legislation.[6]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn6)
The bill is now in conference between the two Houses, but clearly, both parties embrace SNAP funding cuts—it now just becomes a question of how much.[7]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn7)

There is an additional layer to this debate over food assistance programs. The 2008 Farm Bill identified areas called “food deserts,” defined as “area[s] in the United States with limited access to affordable and nutritious food, particularly such an area composed of predominantly lower-income neighborhoods and communities.” [8]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn8)
Lexington-Fayette County, Kentucky has been identified as a city with food deserts.[9]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn9)
Located in Lexington, God’s Pantry is a food bank that serves client families, and its highest-served population’s zip code-area is one of the food desert pockets located within the city.[10]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn10) In 2011, the Lexington-branch site saw a 51% overall increase in its client-base.[11]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn11)
Further, of its total clientele, 60% are SNAP recipients and have indicated that food stamps do not last them the entire month.[12]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn12)
This creates an added dynamic to the SNAP problem: SNAP benefits are not the only benefits up for cuts—all nutritional programs funded by the Farm Bill are in danger, including those funding charities like God’s Pantry.[13]
(file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_edn13)
Put more bluntly: if Congress makes these reductions, more people will be hungry with fewer resources to feed them.

[1] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref1) Kevin Concannon, United States Department of Agriculture, Helping SNAP Recipients Prepare for November 1st Benefit Changes, USDA Blog (Oct. 28, 2013, 11:00 AM), <http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/10/28/helping-snap-recipients-prepare-for-november-1st-benefit-changes/>.

[2] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref2) Id.

[3] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref3) Id.

[4] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref4) Nat’l Farmers Union, 2013 Farm Bill, National Farmers Union (last visited Jan. 12, 2014), <http://nfu.org/farmbill>.

[5] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref5) Nat’l Farmers Union, 2013 Farm Bill—Comparisons (last visited Jan. 20, 2014), <http://nfa.org/images/stories/legislation/SideBySide%20FINAL.pdf>; House Comm. on Agric., H.R. 2642 Summary (last visited Jan. 20, 2014), <http://agriculture.house.gov/sites/republicans.agriculture.house.gov/files/documents/HR2642Summary.pdf>.

[6] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref6) Id.; David Rogers, Farm Bill 2013: House Narrowly Passes Panel-Bill Version, Politico.com (July 11, 2013, 3:51 PM), <http://politi.co/12psU3B>.

[7] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref7) Legislators indicate that they do not want to cut the program entirely but the topic has been too contentious for parties to agree on the amount of cuts to be able to include the nutrition program in the 2013 Farm Bill, and the nutrition program will be dealt with separately for the first time since 1973. Scott Neuman, House Passes Farm Bill Without Food Stamps, National Public Radio (July 11, 2013, 5:20 PM), <http://www.npr.org/blogs/therow-way/2013/07/11/20121527/house-passes-farm-bill-without-food-stamps>.

[8] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref8) Food, Conservation, and Energy Act, 7 U.S.C.A. § 7527 (2008).

[9] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref9) Keiko Tanaka et al., Lexington Community Food Assessment 2004-07, at 13 (2008), http://fdi.ca.uky.edu/files/pdfs/LCFA-2003-07_Research_Report.pdf.

[10] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref10) God’s Pantry Food Bank, Hunger in Fayette County Report 2 (2011), <http://godspantry.org/press-room/hunger-reports>.

[11] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref11) Id.

[12] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref12) Id. at 3.

[13] (file:///C:/Users/Jeremy/AppData/Local/Temp/Myers%20Blog%201%20Post%20.docx#_ednref13) Nat’l Farmers, *supra* note 4.

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